



INSTRUCTIONS FOR PRIESTS, DEACONS AND PARISH LEADERS
Public Worship and Parish Activities during COVID-19

Updated November 16, 2020

NOTE: General Dispensation

The dispensation from the Sunday obligation to attend Mass is granted to all the faithful until further notice (see Letter to the Faithful, Nov. 11, 2020). All the faithful however have the obligation to “keep holy the Lord’s Day” and on Sundays are encouraged to spend time in prayer, participate in a live stream of the Mass, meditate on the Lord’s Passion, Death and Resurrection, and participate in Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy.

GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTING NON-WORSHIP PROGRAMS AT THE PARISH

The Diocese of Kalamazoo has instituted a Parish Community Level 1.5 with an Addendum to allow for guidelines related to non-worship programs held at the Parish. Please note that all indoor and outdoor gatherings, events and programs must adhere to the current Michigan Safe Start Plan. (The Diocese of Kalamazoo is in Region 3).

Parish Meetings

All Parish meetings must be virtual through December 8, 2020.

Faith Formation/Education programs

Elementary Religious Education programs may continue for K-8. High School programs must be virtual. Adult Faith Formation programs must be virtual.

REMINDER: Parishes must follow the Guidelines for Religious Education during COVID (found [here](#)) for all Parish-conducted and Parish sponsored youth religious education programs.

Parishes must submit their [COVID Religious Education Preparedness Plan](#) to the Secretariat for Parish Life and Lay Leadership before classes are allowed to begin.

Following are additional notes for:

Catholic Homeschool Co-ops

Catholic home school co-ops and groups that meet at a Parish are permitted to do so for elementary educational only.

Adult Educational Formation (RCIA, Bible Study, etc.)

All in-person classes and programs are suspended; must be virtual.

Trainings

Parish-conducted trainings for liturgical ministers must take place virtually.

Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy

Works of Mercy are permitted on Parish grounds during this time but must adhere to state guidelines and safety protocols for indoor gatherings. Following are the categories permitted:

Food and Supplies Distributions

Food distribution, clothing distribution, school supply distribution etc., are permitted on Parish grounds. State orders on social distancing and masks must be followed. Occupancy should be monitored and kept at the State orders for retail and other such businesses.

Financial assistance client interviews

Those organizations providing financial assistance to those in need are allowed to have scheduled client interviews at the Parish (e.g. St. Vincent DePaul).

Medical

Medical procedures such as blood drives or medical screenings are permitted at Parishes, and must follow all state orders and protocols for these organizations. Parishes may also reach out to the local health department if they have space to provide for COVID-19 testing or other needs of the local health department.

Support Groups

Support groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) are permitted to meet in Parish facilities. State ordered guidelines for indoor gatherings must be followed.

Parish Organizations

Social or business gatherings are not allowed in the buildings at this time.

Outdoor Gatherings

Following all State orders and guidelines, receptions, and gatherings may take place. Masks, social distancing, and numbers of people must all be monitored. It is important not only to take into consideration the number of people in attendance, but also the density of people for the area. Ample space is necessary to allow for people to maintain 6-foot distancing.

Previously released Liturgical and Worship Guidelines:

Note: These Guidelines are in effect throughout the duration of "Level 1.5" of our return to the public celebration of Holy Mass, and may be amended if/when the circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic change.

Frequency of Masses

In accord with canon 905§2, as it pertains to pastoral need, the Diocesan faculties permit all priests in the Diocese of Kalamazoo to celebrate the Eucharist twice on a weekday and three times on Sundays and holydays of obligation (cf., canon 905, paragraph 2). A "day" consists of 24 continuous hours beginning at midnight (cf., canon 202). Therefore, the Saturday vigil Mass does not count toward the limit of Masses celebrated on Sunday.

The universal law of the Church is silent on exceeding bination or trination limits, most likely with a concern for the health and well-being of priests, so that they are not overwhelmed with an inordinate number of Masses in a day. Nevertheless, these are extraordinary times and, if a priest is able, and would want to exceed the weekday bination and Sunday trination limits, he should feel free to do so, as long as restrictions on the size of gatherings remains.

It is recommended during Level One that Parishes continue the practice of live streaming the Mass as they are able.

General Considerations

Communication

Continue to inform parishioners of key changes to logistical practices at the Parish including, but not limited to, the following:

- Recommendation to wear masks and bring hand-sanitizer as well as where masks and hand sanitizers will be available onsite.
- Changes in logistics to the distribution of Holy Communion
- Changes to parking procedures
- Process for offertory

It is highly recommended to continue to use all communication methods to ensure outreach to all Parishioners and to have updated information on the Parish website and frequent updates to Parish social media channels as needed.

It is recommended that Parishes live stream at least one weekend Mass. Contact the diocesan Office of Communications if you need assistance with this or other communications.

Safety and Hygiene Protocols* (reference: *Diocesan Preparatory Guidelines and Planning Resources, May 2020*)

Hand Washing:

Clergy, and others who assist, are to wash their hands before and after set-up for Mass, as well as after Mass and clean up. Any and all vessels used at Mass must be cleaned with soap and hot water.

Hand sanitizer is to be available in the sanctuary as needed during a liturgy. If possible, hand sanitizer should also be placed near the entrances of the church for the faithful. Invite the faithful to bring their own supply of hand sanitizer to use before Holy Communion.

Gloves:

- 1) Disposable gloves are to be available for sacristans, those preparing, and those cleaning the areas to be used.
- 2) Instructions for the proper removal of the gloves after each use are to be given/posted.

Masks

- 1) Cloth face coverings (masks) are to be worn by everyone approaching the church and inside the church (except for those under 2 years old), as well as all church buildings.
- 2) The priest celebrant and other ministers need not wear masks or gloves during the liturgy, since they are more than 6 feet from the assembly during Mass.
- 3) The priest celebrant, deacon and all EMHC must wear a mask during the distribution of Holy Communion

Liturgical and Support Roles

Please continue to ensure that greeters and ushers are trained in new procedures. Their role is not to police guidelines.

Use of liturgical ministers should be kept to a bare minimum, employing only those absolutely necessary for the worthy celebration of the Eucharist. A single reader may assist with the first and second readings, as well as the Prayers of the Faithful. The use of altar servers is suspended at present.

Continue to educate all those assisting, so that they, in turn, can model good practices.

Safety precautions (e.g. gloves, masks, etc.) are to be followed for ushers, counters, and others.

Celebration of the Holy Mass Particulars

If the clergy are greeting people prior to or following Mass, they should wear a mask and greet in a physically distant way.

Place a stand at the chair, or even on the altar, to hold the Missal for the presidential prayers instead of having a deacon hold the Missal.

A separate chalice is to be provided for the celebrant and each concelebrant and deacon.

Alternatively, the priests could receive from the chalice through self-intinction.

No other lay ministers should receive from the chalice.

The last priest or deacon receiving from the chalice should be the one responsible for purifying it.

Small tables with an ablution cup with water, a purificator, and a dish with a bleach or other disinfectant wipe are to be placed at the station(s) for the distribution of Holy Communion.

The entrance, offertory, and recessional processions should be omitted.

Monetary offerings may be placed in secure receptacles, or in carefully supervised baskets placed at the entrances of the church or other designated spaces.

The gifts of bread and wine should continue to be kept from public areas, and may be brought to the altar simply from the credence table in the sanctuary.

The lavabo should be done without assistance at the credence table.

The hosts to be consecrated for the faithful should be placed in a ciborium on a corporal towards the side of the altar. This allows the priest to pronounce the words of consecration directly over the host he will consume, with the other hosts not directly in front of him as he prays the Eucharistic prayer.

During the elevation of the sacred species concluding the Eucharistic prayer, if there is a deacon present, he may stand alongside the priest and elevate the chalice. Since this action is brief, he does not need to keep a 6-foot-distance.

Holding hands during the Our Father is suspended.

The Sign of Peace continues to be a non-contact gesture or nod.

Reception of Holy Communion

It is of the utmost importance that the worthy handling of and reverence for the Real Presence of our Lord supersede all other values, concerns, or preferences. We have a wonderful opportunity to deepen the understanding of this central and Most Holy Mystery among the faithful during this Year of the Eucharist.

The faithful have a right to receive Holy Communion in the hand or on the tongue.

Receiving Holy Communion on the tongue could cause concern for some parishioners following behind (in the line for Holy Communion) about spreading droplets to the fingers of the minister via breath.

Options for responding to this fear include:

Ask those receiving on the tongue to please receive last

Have a designated minister for Holy Communion for those who wish to receive on the tongue

Distribution of Holy Communion

Distribution of the Precious Blood to the faithful is suspended at this time; neither should the lay faithful receive by intinction.

In Masses with a reasonable number of people, Holy Communion should be distributed only by the priest(s) and deacon(s).

When capacities increase, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC) may be needed; they should to be trained regarding these special procedures. The minister is to wash or sanitize his hands before distributing Holy Communion and must put on a mask.

Holy Communion may not be distributed with gloves, nor may it be received in the hand if someone is wearing a glove. Instead, proper and diligent hand hygiene should be observed before and after distributing and/or receiving Holy Communion.

If possible, a stand with a corporal and hand sanitizer should be at the place of distribution of Holy Communion.

If possible, the reverence and the verbal exchange should take place 6 feet away: For the Faithful: Bow – “The Body of Christ” – “Amen” – then lower mask and step forward to receive.

The minister should take special care not to touch the faithful in any way (hand, tongue, etc.).

Priests, deacons, and EMHCs who make physical contact with a communicant’s tongue or hand are to place the ciborium on the nearby table, then purify their fingers in the ablution cup and dry them on the purificator, to ensure that no particles of the Blessed Sacrament remain on their fingers. They are then to clean the same fingers on the bleach or disinfectant wipe provided, and to continue distributing.

It is not necessary to sanitize hands between each communicant unless physical contact is made.

Special provisions (such as those in need of low-gluten hosts, those unable to receive even low-gluten hosts, and Holy Communion to the homebound) should receive particular consideration from pastors.

If the celebrant of the Mass is in a higher-risk group, a different priest or deacon, (or EMHC if no other clergy are available) may distribute Holy Communion.

Dismissal and Recessional

To avoid large numbers leaving at the same time, consider dismissing the people one pew or one section at a time.

All vessels are to be thoroughly purified and cleaned with soap and hot water after every Mass.

The processional and recessional are suspended at this time.

Outdoor and Open-Air Masses

For complete information please see *Guidelines for In Open Air/Outdoor Masses* (see Appendix).

Celebration of the Sacraments

Eucharistic Adoration, and Perpetual Adoration in particular, are to continue uninterrupted; parish churches should be available for private prayer before our Lord in the Eucharist.

Baptisms

Baptisms may certainly continue. Water for Baptism is to be changed and blessed before each baptism. As always, blessed water should be properly disposed of in the sacrarium or in the ground.

Baptisms are to be done individually, with only the parents, godparents, and immediate family present, following all health protocols.

Confirmations

Bishop Paul J. Bradley has made the decision to grant permission to Pastors (and Administrators where applicable) for the delegation to administer the Sacrament of Confirmation effective August 1, 2020 until November 28, 2020. Pastors are to follow diocesan guidelines in accordance with requesting permission.

The Sacrament of Penance

More scheduled opportunities for individual Confessions are to be made available to the faithful.

Enclosed confessionals should not be used at this time, but suitable areas should be provided in a more open environment; confidentiality and protection of the Seal of Confession are of utmost importance. Confessional screens should be used, both to protect the penitent's right to anonymity and as a barrier.

Pastors may offer to hear Confessions outside or while the penitent is in a vehicle. This may occur only if the Seal of Confession and all other necessary requirements are vigorously observed.

Priests should find ways to visit the homes of the sick and homebound, and to offer the Sacrament of Penance in a way that preserves sacramental integrity, either inside or outside.

Anointing of the Sick and Care of the Sick

Priests and deacons are strongly encouraged to ensure that the sick and homebound are able to receive the Sacraments, following the necessary protocols.

The faithful who are ill should be tended with spiritual sustenance in their time of need. Every effort to bring spiritual comfort to them should be made.

The care of the dying must be a top priority, and Holy Viaticum and the Anointing of the Sick are not to be delayed when needed. Access to healthcare institutions should be pre-arranged in case of an emergency.

No communal celebrations are permitted at this time.

All precautions and protocols mandated by healthcare institutions are to be strictly followed.

Only priests and deacons may take Holy Communion to the sick at this time; the assistance of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion is suspended for the time being.

Weddings

Weddings are permitted, but limited to the priest or deacon, bride, groom, best man, and maid/matron of honor, and guests not to exceed 25 percent capacity of the church building.

Michigan State law *requires* that a marriage license from the County be obtained and submitted to the officiant prior to the wedding. You may not officiate at a wedding without it, and most Counties within the State have an online process for obtaining them.

Funerals

Funerals are permitted, but numbers are guests not to exceed 25 percent capacity of the church building.

Receptions and luncheons in parish facilities are not permitted at this time.

Health precautions are to be observed.